

1 resort areas.

2 Thank you for your service to the  
3 Commission, and I would be glad to act as a state  
4 resource to you as you conduct this important work.

5 Thank you.

6 CHAIRPERSON JAMES: Jim, how do you  
7 pronounce your last name?

8 MR. ZEISLOFT: Zeisloft.

9 CHAIRPERSON JAMES: Zeisloft, Mr. Jim  
10 Zeisloft.

11 MR. ZEISLOFT: Zeisloft. I wanted to say  
12 thank you to the Commission for this opportunity to  
13 speak with you.

14 I am James Zeisloft, the Executive  
15 Director of United Methodist Witness in Pennsylvania.  
16 I represent some 565,000 United Methodists across the  
17 commonwealth as an advocate at the State House.

18 I wanted to speak to you about gambling as  
19 a moral issue, not a religious issue as the gaming  
20 interests might accuse me, but as a moral issue, nor  
21 can we agree with Senator Paul Simon that the question  
22 of gambling should not be a moral one; rather, it

1    should be practical one.   Indeed, morality is  
2    practical.

3                   And I'm not speaking of the kind of  
4    immorality that the gaming industry would accuse us of  
5    like Sigurese and Wuskie (phonetic) in "Wild, Wild  
6    Women."

7                   Surely the nation is expected to be  
8    neither immoral nor amoral.   Gambling is a moral issue  
9    for these reasons.   Gambling is an economic issue.   It  
10   does not produce money, but sucks it out of the  
11   economy, takes money out of the community and moves  
12   money from the losers to the stockholders, leaving on  
13   a percentage of the losers' money behind to pay for  
14   necessarily increased social, government, and  
15   infrastructure costs.

16                  At the same time state and federal  
17   governments are stressing a work ethic in moving from  
18   welfare to work, by legislating approval of gambling  
19   they entice the poorest among us to take a chance on  
20   a win to improve their lives.

21                  Third, though the gambling interests call  
22   it entertainment, they are forced to agree on a 21

1 year age limit, along with alcohol and tobacco use.

2 Why the regulations?

3 Four, gambling creates compulsive behavior

4 and addiction, destroying lives and families.

5 Estimates of the numbers of pathological gamblers in

6 America range from two percent to six and a half

7 percent of the population, and recent studies show

8 that increasing the availability of gambling increases

9 the prevalence of addiction. This is from a report of

10 Attorney General Joseph Curran of Maryland.

11 It is one thing for a government to stand

12 idly by while some small, but tragic percentage of its

13 citizens destroy their lives. It is quite another to

14 give gambling the status of an approved public good,

15 of an ideal.

16 And finally, increased addictive gambling

17 increases bankruptcies and crime. For example,

18 robbery in Gulf Port, Mississippi increased 311

19 percent in the year following the opening of the first

20 casino in May 1993, again, from the Curran report.

21 Gambling is a moral issue. No matter what

22 our religion or no religion at all, if America is to

1 continue as a great leader of nations, we must  
2 reassess our moral convictions and strengthen our  
3 moral foundations.

4 Thank you.

5 CHAIRPERSON JAMES: Bruce Barron. I  
6 understand Mr. Barron is not present.

7 Walt Barbee.

8 Jay Dee Hanson.

9 MR. HANSON: I'm here.

10 CHAIRPERSON JAMES: Good.

11 MR. HANSON: Good afternoon. I'm pleased  
12 to present the position of the United Methodist  
13 General Board of Church and Society, the National  
14 Social Concerns Agency of the United Methodist Church.

15 We're pleased the Commission is holding  
16 hearings on this most important issue.

17 I might stop just for a second. There has  
18 been some discussion already about there being  
19 religious issues and there being economic issues. An  
20 essential element of protestant thought is you don't  
21 divide life into religious sectors and secular  
22 sectors.